

Confident Drummer

Free Resources

Click & Timing

Altitude Drumming – Volume 6

- FREE EXCERPT -

Confident Drummer Series

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Advanced Drum Education Portal

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Click & Timing

As incredible as it sounds, drummers who are really good at playing time, and can do that musically and with feel, are pretty rare, and obviously in great demand.

The thing is that for some drummers good timing is a quite vague idea, which gets taken for granted, since playing drums must also automatically mean keeping time well.

The most we may need to do is put a metronome in our headphones and then it's problem solved, we are sure our timing is good.

While obviously the situation is a bit more complicated. Like for any other skill, if we want to master it, we need to go deep.

That's why i felt it was necessary to organize the techniques and insights collected over the course of many years in a gradual and coherent program that covered all the most important aspects in detail.

The book is arranged in clear sections, one for each main topic:

- The difference between Timing, Groove and Feel.
- Playing on the beat, ahead or behind.
- Learning different strategies to deal with imperfections.
- Playing with and without a metronome.
- Playing with loops and samples.
- Creating a good monitor mix.
- Handling timing situations in bands.
- Understanding timing scenarios in different musical genres.
- How to use recording as a powerful feedback tool.

In total it's 100 pages of materials, and in it you are going to find all the concepts you need to become an outstanding timekeeper, who can provide a steady pulse and play good time along with the other musicians,

all of it with great feel and while grooving hard, both with and without a metronome.

In this free excerpt we are going to focus on the difference between Timing, Groove and Feel, and a couple of ideas to deal with imperfections and reinforce our inner pulse.

We are also going to work on a dozen exercises picked from the 50+ studies included in the method.

I wanted to arrange this booklet so that it's like a mini course, that you can use to instantly boost your timing skills.

As discussed throughout Confident Drummer, separating the logical, physical and emotional parts of the skill we want to develop guarantees great clarity and produces remarkably better results.

For this reason, even in learning about time keeping, it's useful to take advantage of this model, which allows us to see how the different components relate to each other and help shape our inner clock:

- The logical, conceptual part, is about our internal pulse, our perception of time and how flawlessly we feel the spaces between the notes.

All the technique and musicality in the world mean nothing unless they are supported by certainty about where exactly each note is supposed to be placed.

THE LOGICAL PART OF KEEPING TIME DETERMINES OUR TIMING.

- The physical part is about having enough technique to be able to accurately reproduce the perceived pulse.

Once we define groove as the consistency with which we play and the regularity of note placement, it becomes clear how deeply it is connected to technique and physical aspects, because great technical control equals perfect accuracy and therefore lots of uniformity.

This is why it's often the case that a good chunk of the time keeping issues drummers experience are related to technical limitations.

THE PHYSICAL PART OF KEEPING TIME DETERMINES OUR GROOVE.

- The emotional part is about the feelings and emotions elicited by what we play.

If when performing we feel emotions, and there are no conceptual or technical obstacles, then those emotions will inevitably emerge in what we play.

It boils down to three elements: we need to be able to recognize our emotions, we need to be able not only to feel them but also to create them, and we need to be able to express them accurately through what we play.

The way to do it is both practicing feeling emotions, and manipulating the pulse through beat placement (ahead or behind).

THE EMOTIONAL PART OF KEEPING TIME DETERMINES OUR FEEL.

Nevertheless, no matter how much we improve our sense of time, we still have to deal with the fact that we'll never reach absolute perfection of execution.

So here are two of the eleven strategies from the chapter on how to deal with imperfections, so as to let go of perfection while still aiming for excellence:

1- Develop and finetune an inner alarm system. We can think of this mechanism like a warning device that gets activated when we deviate from the beat.

The longer we practice with a reliable external source of the pulse (metronome, loops or musicians with very good timing), the more this system becomes sensitive and gets triggered at the tiniest variation.

At some point it will be so effective that it will intervene even in absence of external references.

We are going to automatically feel a sensation arise, which will warn us we are deviating slightly, and as a consequence instantly proceed with a correction.

This precious tool will be crucial to make the right adjustments, in almost imperceptible ways, before the discrepancy from the beat gets so wide that it becomes impossible to perform a smooth and linear correction.

2- Take responsibility about where the beat is. We can't rely on the metronome forever, chasing it and using it like a comfortable crutch to continuously show us where the pulse is.

The rule is that the metronome is a useful tool when practicing, and even in those musical contexts that require it, but we shouldn't allow ourselves to become dependent on it.

In fact, it's easy to come to rely on it for such a long time that we end up believing we can no longer do without it.

The problem is that we can't afford to let the metronome lead, because we risk becoming drummers who play in time but sound terrible, totally stiff and constantly hesitant.

Always looking for confirmation from the click, at each and every beat, to tell us that we are right and we are doing fine.

At a certain point it's crucial to take things to the next level and start taking responsibility for the tempo, leading, trusting our inner sense of time, and, only when necessary, resorting to micro corrections.

Always from a position from which we are the ones providing the pulse, and we do it with conviction while maintaining our own cadence.

Let's give ourselves permission to drive the pulse and be true leaders: comfortable, confident, relaxed, strong. After all we are the engine of the band!

Here is the key distinction: even when we practice to a click, we think of it as a reference we use to verify the timing that we generate, as opposed to the correct pulse to which we must conform.

Each exercise is linked to its video demo, which you can access by clicking on the transcription.

If you want to check out the whole 6 minute video demo on YouTube, click HERE.

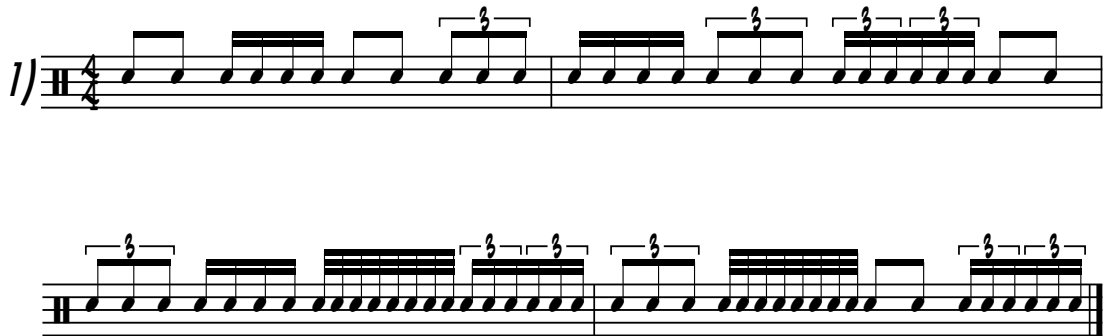
The table of contents of the method is included at the end of this 11 page PDF.

To find out more and to buy the method you can visit the dedicated page here:

'Click & Timing' - Altitude Drumming - Volume 6

Timing Exercises

*Different
Subdivisions
p.14 ex.6*

1) 

*Click on 2nd 16th
p.14 ex.7*

2) 

*Click on 4th 16th
p.14 ex.7*

3) 

*Click on 2nd &
4th 16th
p.14 ex.7*

4) 

*Click on 3rd
8th Note Triplet
p.14 ex.7*

5) 

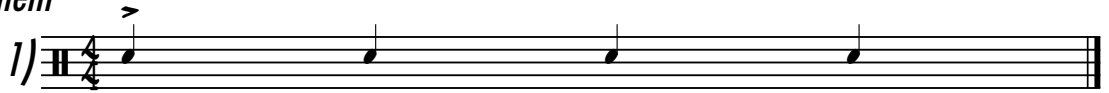
*Click Muted for
2 Bars
p.14 ex.8*

6) 

Groove Exercises

Mechanics of Movement

Slow
p.27 ex.1



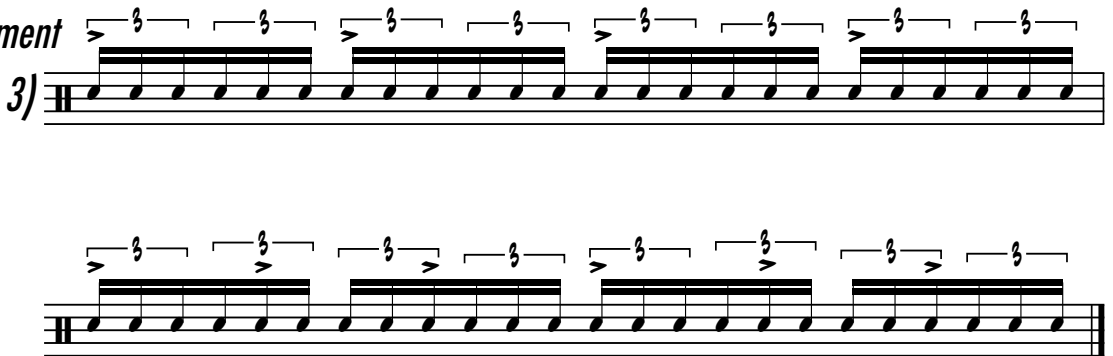
Mechanics of Movement

Medium
p.27 ex.1



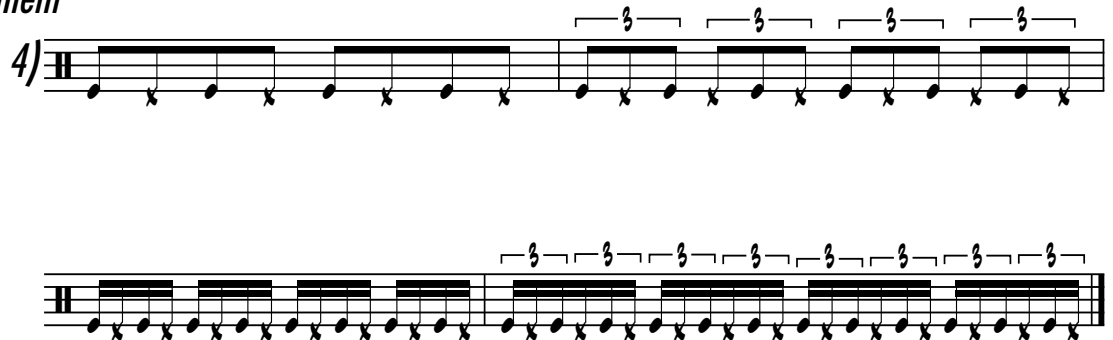
Mechanics of Movement

Hands
p.27 ex.3



Mechanics of Movement

Feet
p.29 ex.4



Mechanics of Movement

Feet
p.29 ex.5



Groove Exercises

Coordination
p.31 ex.2

6)

The exercise consists of two staves of music. The top staff is in 4/4 time and contains four measures of eighth-note triplets. Each measure has a bracket above it with a '3' and arrows pointing to the notes. The bottom staff is in 4/4 time and contains four measures of eighth notes. Each measure has a bracket above it with a '3' and arrows pointing to the notes. The notes in the bottom staff are aligned with the notes in the top staff.

Coordination
p.31 ex.4

7)

The exercise consists of a single staff of music in 4/4 time. It contains four measures of eighth notes. Each measure has a bracket above it with a '3' and arrows pointing to the notes. The notes are aligned with the notes in the previous exercise.

Feel Exercises

Feel - On the Beat
p.44 ex.1

Click

1)

The exercise consists of a single staff of music in 4/4 time. It contains four measures of eighth notes. Each measure has a vertical dashed line above it, labeled 'Click', indicating the downbeat. The notes are aligned with the notes in the previous exercise.

Contents:

- Introduction	p.6
- The Logical Part: Inner Pulse - Timing	p.11
- Studies to Develop our Timing	p.13
- The Physical Part: Technical Control - Groove	p.19
- Studies to Develop our Groove	p.25
- The Emotional Part: Expressing Emotions - Feel	p.32
- Studies to Develop our Feel	p.37
- Playing on the Beat, Ahead or Behind	p.40
- Strategies to Handle Imperfections	p.45
- Timing Approaches: with and without a Click	p.51
- The Metronome	p.57
- Electronic Loops and Samples	p.60
- Monitor Mix: Headphones - In-Ears - Stage Monitor	p.64
- The Soundcheck	p.73
- Timing Scenarios in Bands	p.78
- Timing Scenarios in Different Musical Styles	p.83
- Recording Ourselves: the most Powerful Feedback Tool	p.91
- Recommended Resources	p.97